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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003099

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TALABANI SEEKS CALL ON PRESIDENT BUSH IN
SEPTEMBER; SETS TERMS FOR VISIT TO SYRIA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (U) This is an action cable, see paragraph 6.

12. (C/NF) President Talabani told me on July 26 that he plans to leave Baghdad on September 10 to attend the Socialist Democratic Summit in New York. He said he must arrive in New York no later than September 13 for this meeting with various European and other heads of state. In conjunction with this trip, he requests a meeting in Washington with President Bush either immediately before or after the summit, depending on the President's schedule. Talibani will underscore the critical role the U.S. needs to play to help unite the people of Iraq, and the importance for the U.S. to sustain a long-term relationship with Iraq.

13. (C/NF) Regarding the proposed Arab summit on terrorism mentioned in septel, Talabani said Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa is trying to alter the scope of the meeting by adding the Gaza Strip to the agenda. (Comment. Its inclusion would complicate the discussions and detract attention from the original intent of this summit. End comment.)

14. (C/NF) Talabani mentioned that Syria has again approached him regarding an official visit to Damascus. Talabani rebuffed the offer and stated he cannot visit until Syria complies with the following conditions:

-- that all wanted members of the former regime and terrorists, as well as other persons actively opposing to the legitimate Iraqi government, be turned over to Iraqi authorities,

-- that Syria return all Iraqi-owned funds held in Syrian banks and other safe locations to Iraq, and

-- that Syria's media stop broadcasting programs opposing the legitimate Iraqi government, and return to programming that supports the new Iraq.

15. (C/NF) Talabani stated that Syria has proposed establishing a joint committee to address these issues, but added that he is not in a hurry to meet this request. Rather, Talabani intends to keep pressure on Syria until it meets the conditions mentioned above. (Comment. We defer to Embassy Damascus, but think Talabani's approach necessary for Syria to understand its need for action. We must remain flexible in our approach. End comment.)

16. (C/NF) Action request. We request that the Department coordinate with the White House to determine the best time for a Talabani visit. It would be an ideal follow-on to the earlier visit by PM Ja'afari. The proposed time-frame would place the visit close to the fall session of the UNGA in New York.

Khalilzad